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BY THE OLD FORT VERMILION TRAIL TO

BATTLE RIVER PRAIRIE.

Over thirty years ago in all land dealing offices was given advice to go to Peace River Country: that is to Grande Prairie, or Peace River Crossing. The late McCartier was building the railroad, the last in the big railway building rush in Canada; he was getting cheap labour in wilderness, looking for work, and grub, all of which could not be accommodated and virtually they had to chew their blankets on long trekking.

By the spring of 1916 the track was laid up to the top plateau approaching the Peace River Crossing. No gravel balast was done; - but the traffic was in full swing from 8 - 10 miles per hour; - the settlers cars was dangerous, swaying to be upturned. In one of such exactly 29 years ago I landed at the end of steel, unloaded the hyaing and other farming machinery, 7 cows, 1 Angus bull and my dependable companions Big Jim and Lazy Bill--oxen team--all anxious for the land of Promise:-Battle River Prairie.

At Morinville a Frenchman,Bouchard, with small carlot: 3 horses, wagon, some haying machinery, joined me for the same destination. By the 5th of May we crossed [illegible] by ferry the Peace River;-before I had hired Anderson the White Mud River was swollen high but with the help of the late Le Pretre we made a log raft and ferried all the goods and animals across to the high alkaly flats, where

was old grass greedy eaten by poor beasts. The oldest Buchards horse was so weak, had to leave there. Up to White Mud river the trail was wide enough for a wagon and north of it was white alkaline flats with no bush for about 8 miles to the Deep Lake, from which place trail was for pack horses or dog teem. In many places on high ground we had to widen it by cutting poplars; over small willows we just slid over.

In 9 days we had made about 66 miles nothing to complain of; but now the country was mostly continuous swamp 6 - 8 inches frost out with standing water up to 7(?) foot places; we had to follow winter dog trail, otherwise would be lost in the poplar bush. I remember the land surveyors pack horse outfit, that we met coming to White Mud after cached supplies. I asked how far is it to the fringe of high land, so-called Battle River Prairie and how the trail is? Reply was about 14 miles and the worst trail is ahead.

Next we struck a creek with standing water like small lake on other side, where no signs of trail could be noticed. With a stick I sounded about 3 ft. deep for a start. Now this is the way we crossed such obstacles. I mounted Big Jim, harness and about 150 ft. strong rope to solid footing and pulled the wagons across, and the cattle in latter days willingly swimed, following the Lazy Bill. Buchard's horses was dragged the same way, one by one. But here his oldest horse got stuck in the mud and floundered with head under the water. Buchard

luckily was across in his wagon on higher ground still in water but had to jump hip deep to keep the horses led above water. This recollection is quite vivid in my memory. Of course, Big Jim pulled that poor brute out but it never wore a harness. About 2 miles farther we got small high meadow, where we camped, calling a day.

On the other morning my oxen friends pulled the Buchard's wagon to this camp ground.

In 5 days we made 14 miles. On 20th of May 1916 we landed on the fringe of the present North Star Little Prairie, the Buchards' wagon still about 7 miles left back.

I will never forget the sight: about 3 miles stretch, green grass about 4 inches high, because old grass had been burnt a month ago. We made coffee, ate smocked pork and praised the Lord.